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Manual of Instructions

E M E R G E N C Y   I N F O R M A T I O N   A G E N T S

in the  
State, Federal Emergency  
Disease Eradication  
Program



November 1955

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Agricultural Research Service

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agriculture -- Washington



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Agricultural Research Service

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MANUAL OF INSTRUCTIONS

Arrangements for assignment. You, as an emergency information agent to serve in case of an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, rinderpest, or other contagious animal diseases, will be notified by telephone of your assignment. Travel instructions will be given you during this telephone call.

Arrival on the job. Report immediately to the office of the U. S. Department of Agriculture Veterinarian in Charge and/or the State Veterinarian. If no announcement of an outbreak has yet been made, sit tight. The Federal Veterinarians will be in constant communication with ARS (Agricultural Research Service) headquarters in Washington. Your Federal information teammate will arrive as soon as transportation permits.

TIMING THE ANNOUNCEMENT

The time never seems opportune for announcing the outbreak of a serious infectious animal disease which requires emergency slaughter operations.

Unless announcement has come prematurely it will be made from ARS headquarters in Washington.

Too early. Premature announcement is disadvantageous to control operations and can contribute to a dangerous spread of the disease. Attempts might be made to move exposed animals before enforceable quarantines are established. Animals being moved might be in the highly infectious incubation period which precedes the appearance of symptoms. Shipped to the stockyards for quick disposal, they could infect the yards and cause a disastrous spread to many parts of the country.



Too late. On the other hand, once diagnosis has been made, every hour that passes increases the possibility of garbled news getting out. Without the proper background information to accompany it, this can cause the type of misinformed scarehead reporting that brings fear, hysteria, and confusion. Days and days of hard work may be necessary to recover ground lost by not making an objective report at the earliest possible time.

Somewhere between these two extremes is the best timing. You and your teammate, the emergency information agents on the spot, working with the State and Federal Veterinarians and with ARS headquarters, can help arrive at the most advisable timing. A mature news sense and accurate background knowledge of the local situation can help to avoid both horns of this dilemma.

After the decision is made and cleared in Washington, inform the local press.

#### INFORMATION POLICY

The Department has always operated according to the open-door information policy, as long as national security is not involved. Only in the event of suspected or evidenced sabotage would there be any classification, and this would pertain to the act itself, not to the eradication of the disease.

It is vitally important for the information team to coordinate State and national releases so that the same basic facts and policy are being presented to the public from both sources at the same time. This coordination will prevent the release of one set of facts and figures in Washington, while a different set is released in the State.

Objective reporting prevents rumor, hysteria, misunderstanding, and misinformation, any of which can cause resentment, resistance to eradication



procedures, and poor relations with the press. An ill-informed press might turn to the man in the street, the uninformed who means no harm, the disgruntled, and the ever-present quack who has the "cure." With objective reporting, the press can give invaluable assistance; bottled up, untold damage.

#### SCOPE OF ACTIVITY

You and your Federal teammate will act as information staff advisers to the State and Federal Veterinarians. Your duties are two-fold:

1. To serve the local press, radio, television, and correspondents who come to the operation site.
2. To assist the Federal Veterinarian-in-Charge in providing the necessary information for ARS headquarters in Washington.

National coverage will be handled by ARS headquarters in Washington.

Handouts may be necessary for local coverage. These handouts will be prepared by the emergency information agents and cleared through ARS headquarters in Washington. Major news breaks should be coordinated for simultaneous State and national release. Handouts should not be mailed.

#### INFORMATION PRIORITIES

First local announcements should be a calm appraisal of the facts, giving reassurance where it is warranted.

The following points should be covered in early releases:

1. Explain human health aspects of the disease. If it does not affect human health, stress it; if it does affect human health, carefully explain the relationship.
2. Describe the history of previous outbreaks in this country if the disease has appeared here before. Give background of experience, methods of control, and economic effect in other countries.

3. Report that the diagnosis is scientifically determined, and the veterinary profession has had ample experience to handle the problem.
4. Advise farmers: Do not permit unauthorized visitors; keep stray animals away; don't visit other farms or premises where animals are kept; watch your own animals for symptoms and report promptly any unusual conditions.
5. Advise city people: Don't drive out to see outbreaks; don't try to visit with country neighbors; rest assured that the outbreak will not interfere with food supplies.
6. Report that quarantines have been established at such and such places; the public is asked to respect them.

#### FEDERAL-STATE RELATIONSHIPS

All animal disease eradication is carried out under working agreements between the State in which the disease appears and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Carrying out their respective responsibilities, but under joint administration, are the State Department of Agriculture, usually represented by the Office of the State Veterinarian, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, represented by the Agricultural Research Service.

A standby organization of State and Federal cooperation has been formed to handle emergency animal disease eradication programs. The organizational chart outlining these functions is in your kit.

At the head of the Federal organization is the ARS Animal Disease Eradication Branch Chief. Under him, on the State level, is the Federal Veterinarian-in-Charge, working in cooperation with the State Regulatory Official who is usually the State Veterinarian. These two men, operating jointly, will direct the information activities.

The Assistant Veterinarian-in-Charge of Emergency Operations under the State and Federal veterinarians, directs the emergency program from a headquarters near the area of the outbreak but outside the quarantine zone. Reporting directly to him is the Veterinarian-in-Charge of Field Units, who will supervise the work at the scene of the outbreak, which of course will be inside the quarantine zone. If you are operating within these areas, in such duties as conducting authorized groups of the working press, you report to the Veterinarian in Charge of Emergency Operations or the Veterinarian in Charge of Field Units.

The Federal responsibility to prevent interstate movement of livestock, livestock products, by-products, and materials (see Orders 309 and 376 in your kit) must be brought into complementary play with State authority on similar movements intrastate.

Indemnities paid to livestock owners are usually a joint responsibility of the Federal and State governments.

Policing and enforcement are carried out under local authority.

The above format will be followed in every emergency animal disease outbreak. Poultry, for example, will be handled in exactly the same way except for preliminary diagnosis, which would be made at approved examining stations (see Poultry Diagnostic Laboratories map in your kit).

("Questions and Answers," a part of your information kit, gives detailed analysis of quarantines, condemnations, indemnities, inspection, disinfection, enforcement, and other details of a joint program.)

#### SUGGESTED SHORT-TERM PROCEDURES

Starting. Get organized! Discuss the information problems at the earliest possible moment with the State and Federal Veterinarians and their principal assistants. The decision should be reached at that time concerning who shall be the "spokesman" in giving out official policy statements to the



public, holding press conferences, and otherwise discussing information of an over-all program nature.

Control. Arrange for the orderly handling of information, preferably from a central point. In the interest of keeping the facts straight, make sure that only the spokesman gives out policy and complete situation news. Information given out by other employees will deal with the work they are actually doing. Help the Veterinarians see that all employees understand the necessity for keeping this rule and for referring other questions to emergency headquarters.

Press conferences. The press must have access to the selected spokesman. A daily press conference is suggested, at a time most convenient to the press and the spokesman. To meet the needs of morning and evening newspapers, press conferences may be arranged on alternate days at noon, and at the end of the day's work. Briefing maps are a convenient aid, so the spokesman can give the visual interpretation of the activities. This should be followed by questions. Handouts may be used to advantage at such meetings.

Photography and radio interviews. Photographers and radiomen with wire recorders cannot be allowed to roam at will on and off quarantined premises, yet opportunities must be afforded for picture-taking and first-hand interviews for the radio. There will be demands for still pictures, newsreels, and television sequences. Pooling and supervision appears to be the simplest answer. When there is more than one photographer or radio interviewer for each medium, one should be chosen by lot. He must agree to two things: (1) To make prints and recordings available to all competitors and (2) to abide by all sanitary rules and regulations pertaining both to his person and his equipment. All picture-taking and recording must be under the direct supervision of a sanitary technician assigned by the Veterinarian-in-Charge. This man must accompany photographers and radio recorders at all times to see

that the sanitary rules are observed. The same sanitary regulations shall apply to official photographers and sound men sent by the State or Federal agencies or departments. Live TV must be handled under the same sanitary regulations.

#### DAILY INFORMATION REPORTS

It is the responsibility of the Assistant Veterinarian in Charge of Emergency Operations to gather information each day from his men in the field and make a telegraphic report at the end of the day's work to the Agricultural Research Service. He may want the assistance of the emergency information agents, who are trained in gathering and transmitting data accurately, to help with this report. This arrangement would also relieve the Veterinarian of the extra chore of passing on the report to the information agents, who need the most up-to-date information. Furthermore, the information agents can assist in insuring the completeness of the information to be forwarded.

The following points should be included in the daily report:

1. Diagnosis of new seats of infection, number of premises involved, and number of actively infected and contact animals.
2. Changes in quarantines, either extensions or releases.
3. Changes in buffer zoning, either extensions or releases.
4. Establishment of disinfection stations, and any change in their number.
5. Number of premises and animals inspected in (a) the quarantine zone and (b) the buffer zone.
6. Number of premises on which slaughter operations were completed.
7. Number of animals slaughtered, by species.
8. Number of premises disinfected after slaughter.
9. Number of new employees, (a) technical, and (b) nontechnical.

10. Amount of indemnities paid during the day, and corrected cumulative figures.
  11. Number of premises on which test animals were placed.
  12. Any other 'newsworthy' developments.
- If possible, this information for ARS should be filed overnight.

#### LONGER-TERM OPERATIONS

Periodic progress reports. Periodic reports of major developments in an outbreak help to keep various interested groups informed. Experience has shown that requests for such information are sufficiently numerous to demand releases of this kind.

For whom intended. The information is directed primarily to employees of the Department of Agriculture, both in Washington and in the field, State Department of Agriculture employees, to various segments of the livestock industry, to publications desiring only minimum coverage, and to other groups, such as Members of Congress, who might ask to be kept current with the developments.

Frequency of release. During the early days of an outbreak, major developments shape so rapidly that reports should be made every week. The data should be in the Division of Information, Agricultural Research Service, in Washington every Monday morning. If operations extend over a long period, the report can be issued on a monthly basis as soon as the pace of the campaign slackens.

Material included. The report should contain the latest available information concerning: (1) Extent of outbreak, including the number of farms and other premises affected, the number of herds, and the number of cattle, sheep, swine, goats, and wildlife; (2) quarantines, defining location and extent of quarantined area (in continuing reports, only changes in quarantines



need be mentioned); (3) progress of slaughter operations, including number of animals slaughtered (total number and numbers by species); (4) indemnities, average and total payments by species, total amount paid in the period covered, and corrected cumulative figures; (5) progress of disinfection measures; (6) number of test animals placed on how many premises; (7) number of test premises released for restocking; and (8) any other newsworthy material that might help to complete the picture.

Format. The material is most useful when presented in straight narrative style, under appropriate subheads for easy reference. Tables of figures may be appended whenever considered helpful.

#### RECORDS FOR THE HISTORIAN

In the heat of a campaign, when the attention of everybody is focused on the minute-to-minute business of eradicating the disease, the long-term record of the campaign is too apt to be forgotten. Unless the information agent makes it his business, it is forgotten. Some things, unless they are set down at the time, cannot be correctly placed later, and many valuable details are lost which would have been of great help to the program historian. An accurate history is of considerable value in forming policies and plans for future disease eradication campaigns.

Dating documents. Chronology is all-important to the historian. Every document used in the campaign should be dated. This is important not only for history but for day-to-day administration.

Daily diary. The best chronological record -- and one which can be used to correct occasional lapses in the dating of documents -- is a daily diary. The information man should keep one, or see that one is kept, giving as fully as possible the events of the day. To the historian, this can easily be the most valuable document of the campaign, the key to chronological treatment.



Confidential matters should be made a part of the diary. While keeping some matters in confidence is highly important at the time, it is surprising how quickly the need runs out for confidential classification.

Maps. If a map is kept, for instance on the spread of the disease, it should be dated. A new dated map should be provided each month. Not only does this have current value -- it can be photographed by newsmen -- but it provides a valuable record of the month-to-month progress of the campaign.

Photos. If the campaign has a photographic section, each photograph should be kept in a permanent file with a complete and accurate caption, including the month and year taken.

Clippings. A file of clippings is an aid to the historian -- but only if they are dated and bear the name of the journal on each one. A clipping without date and source is useless.

Human interest. Human angles, unless they are picked up by feature writers, are frequently lost because they have no official status for the files. The history of any program can be immensely enlivened by a file of dated anecdotes. They can add a great deal to an understanding of the job that has been done.

These are suggested items. Others will occur to the information man on the job. All possible aids should be furnished the historian, so an interesting and accurate account of the outbreak can be written later.

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